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C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 001197

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SA, SA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/09/13

TAGS: [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [MV](#)

SUBJECT: Maldives: Let Us Not Take This Friend For Granted

Refs: A) STATE 184643, B) EMB/DESK FAX, JULY 2, 2003

(U) Classified by Donald A. Camp, Charge d'Affaires.
Reasons 1.5 (b, d)

1. (C) SUMMARY: The Government of the Republic of Maldives has made only one substantive request of us this past year -- to defer until later this year a decision on whether to graduate the Maldives from LDC status. Embassy strongly believes meeting this modest request will go a long way towards reassuring the Maldives that their recent helpfulness to us (Article 98 signature, support for the war on terrorism) is not unrequited. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) The GoRM has requested that the USG again support the Maldivian effort to be retained on the LDC list during the upcoming 2003 Substantive Session of the Economic and Social Council.

3. (C) Embassy believes that, in addition to the valid economic vulnerability arguments, the Department should consider closely the overall U.S.-GoRM relationship as it decides how to respond to this request. The GoRM does not ask us for much and this is clearly a critical issue for them.

4. (C) Though we enjoy a high level of ongoing cooperation on many levels, Department should consider especially these specific examples:

-- The Maldives was one of the first countries in the world to agree to an Article 98 agreement, when they were told it was an important USG priority.

-- The Maldives has always supported the U.S. in its counter-terrorism efforts, not always an easy task for a member of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

-- The Maldives maintains an excellent military-to-military relationship with the U.S.

-- The Maldives, astride 1000 miles of Indian Ocean air and sea lanes, and just north of the U.S. base at Diego Garcia, was quick to offer the U.S. unlimited overflight rights after 9/11.

-- The Maldivian Monetary Authority (Central Bank) responds quickly and thoroughly to all messages from us on controlling terrorist financing.

-- The U.S. is committed to improving our ties to moderate Islamic states. The Maldives is a prime example of such a nation, in a volatile region.

5. (C) COMMENT: The Maldives is a nation whose assistance we may need in the future and whose help we have had in the past. Political considerations, as well as economic, are important to developing our position on this issue. Embassy urges we meet their modest request on the LDC Graduation issue. Please advise. END COMMENT.

CAMP